(b) The percentage growth in tourist traffic to India during first ten months of current year as compared to the corresponding period of last year was 7.4

[English]

Revival of IISCO

267. SHRI SANAT KUMAR MANDAL: Will the Minister of STEEL be pleased to state:

(a) whether the attention of the Government has been invited to the news-item appearing in the 'Economic Times' dated October 19, 1996 captioned 'IISCO saviours seek time to forward package to SAIL' and

(b) if so, the facts, latest position and reaction of the Government thereto?

THE MINISTER OF STEEL AND MINISTER OF MINES (SHRI BIRENDRA PRASAD BAISHYA): (a) and (b) Yes, Sir. SAIL has invited offers for participation in the revival/modernisation of IISCO through a joint venture arrangement with SAIL retaining majority share-holding of 51% in the joint venture Company. SAIL have received offers from two parties viz. M/s Tyazhpromexport (TPE) of Russia and M/s. Mitsui of Japan. SAIL had sought extension of time from the BIFR in order to further assess the offers received by them. The BIFR have since granted extension of time to SAIL till 6th January, 1997. The latest position is that M/s. Mitsui of Japan have indicated their unwillingness for equity participation which is an essential requirement for selection of a Joint Venture Partner.

As IISCO has been referred to the BIFR, any scheme to be taken up for modernisation will have to be in accordance with the orders of the BIFR in this regard.

[Translation]

Derailment of Train

268. SHRI DADA BABURAO PARANJPE: Will the Minister of RAILWAYS be pleased to state:

(a) whether the Jammu bound Jhelum Express was derailed on September 14, 1996 at 7 a.m. between Nibaura and Khaira stations and as a result thereof many employees of railway staff died at the spot;

(b) if so, the details thereof;

(c) whether the Government have conducted any enquiry into the causes of the accident;

(d) if so, the details of the inquiry alongwith the steps taken against the erring employees and loss of Government equipments etc.; and

(e) the strategy proposed to be followed to avert such accidents in future?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF RAILWAYS (SHRI SATPAL MAHARAJ): (a) and (b). On 14.9.1996, 8 coaches of Jammu Tawi-Pune Jhelum Express derailed between Raver and Nimbhora stations on Khandwa-Bhusaval section of Central Railway. In this accident, 1 passenger died, 4 persons sustained grievous injury and 15 others sustained simple injuries.

(c) and (d). This accident is being enquired into by the commissioner of Railway Safety, Central Circle, whose report is awaited. Action under the Discipline & Appeal Rules shall be taken against the persons who will be found responsible after enquiry report is received.

(e) The following measures have been taken to reduce derailments :-

(i) The track structure is being strengthened. The rails are being converted into long welded rails panels by welding and removing fish plates.

(ii) The track is maintained by tie tamping and ballast cleaning machines. Track is also being laid with track renewal trains and portal cranes.

(iii) For monitoring of the track geometry and running characteristics of the track, sophisticated track recording cars, oscillograph cars and portable accelerometers are being progressively used.

(iv) For detection of hidden flaws in the railway not visible to the naked eye, ultrasonic flaw detectors are used.

(v) The condition of rolling stock has been improved. Four wheeler wagons are being replaced with better bogie Air brake stock.

(vi) To prevent cases of cold breakage of axles, all RCH Depots have been equipped with ultrasonic testing equipment for timely detection of cases of flaws developing in the axles.

(vii) The examination pattern of goods and coaching trains has been rationalised.

(viii) Workshops have been modernised.

(ix) Safety inspections and safety checks have been intensified.

[English]

New Railway Projects

269. SHRI BALAI CHANDRA RAY:
SHRI MEHBOOB ZAHEDI:
SHRI R. SAMBASIVA RAO:

Will the Minister of RAILWAYS be pleased to state:

(a) whether the Government proposed to launch some new railway projects in the country during 1996-97;